

THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CHINA DECISIONS

The Shifting Line of American Group Mentality

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MICE, as every enlightened American knows, are regularly pregnant with mountains. Since the fall of Chinese civilization before the onrush of Communism—a matter which involves four thousand years of time and almost half a billion people—is a massive and complex event, it follows, by all the laws of common opinion, that it must have a simple cause. Since the United States was in singularly intimate contact with China immediately before that country's transformation into a Stalinist state, it follows, accordingly, that the responsible mice must have been Americans. And since it is now plain that the Chinese mountain has turned out to be a volcano, how should Americans, always anxious to pin responsibility, suspect that the primal causes are anything other than certain mice hidden Hiss-like in the Washington hay? Some point at administration mice generally, others single out certain ones in particular, and denounce them as the sole villains behind the present volcanic eruption.

This is not to say that the United States did not have a measure of responsibility for what happened in China, or that the highly placed Americans who initialed the several China decisions are not to be debited with errors of knowledge and heart, any more than

they are to be deprived of credit for wisdom and sense in other policy decisions. But, having said this, one must also say that the present debate over past China policy is by and large obscurantist. This is so even if we leave aside the Communist accusation, on the one extreme, that the United States government, under the domination of Wall Street and the NAM, used money and force to support a tottering, reactionary, feudal regime; or the comparably vociferous charge, on the other extreme, that the United States government plotted on behalf of world Communism. The MacArthur hearings, the investigations of the Institute of Pacific Relations, and the quarrel over Philip Jessup's fitness for public office have not so much elicited new facts as compounded old confusions. They have led to wordy disputation over matters not of central relevance, at the expense of key questions.

There has been much talk, for instance, of the degree of truculence MacArthur should have shown to the Chinese Communists, but there has been very little talk as to how American economic and military assistance should have been apportioned between Western Europe and Eastern Asia—or for that matter should now be. There have been occasional denunciations of Britain's trade with Red China via Hong Kong, but there have been few discussions of her virtual withdrawal from Far Eastern affairs. There has been more argument over who in the administration supported recognition of the Chinese Communists after they came to power than there has been over who in public life approved of Chinese Communism at an earlier time, when such approval had a concrete historical effect. And when this last issue is raised at all, it is raised not in terms of who was confused, stupid, or green in his opinions, but in terms of who was Russian in his political allegiance. The question as to who is a Communist is of vital importance to the personnel branches of our government, but exclusive consideration of

WE PRESENT in this issue two articles on U.S. foreign policy, the first by HERRYMON MAURER, focusing on the China problem, the second an analysis of the approach prescribed by George Kennan for the task of dealing with Soviet aggression. Both present some very pertinent facts and analyses, which, we predict, readers will find both perceptive and provocative. Mr. Maurer is the author of *Collision of East and West* (1951) and other books on the East, a subject to which he brings fifteen years of experience, much of it first-hand. For five years an editor of *Fortune*, he has been for the past five years a contributor to that magazine. He has served also as publications adviser and lecturer at Pendle Hill, the Quaker study center. He was born in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, in 1914.

the question as to who had a party card, or was a Red Army spy, has let a great many people unjustifiably off the hook of responsibility for the China decision.

It is evident of course, that, while the fall of China was hardly the work of a bunch of party-liners in Washington back rooms, there have been some party-liners and some back rooms. It is also evident that the State Department has been at pains to identify a large body of State Department "data" on China with the inevitable course of history, and has given occasional and uneasy indications of trying to hide some sort of corpse. I am persuaded, however, that the discussion of such matters should now be made subordinate to the weighing of issues of larger moment, as for instance, policy toward China *now* or—even more important—United States foreign policy in general, its premises, its aims, its intellectual foundations. Here the question of responsibility for the China decision is highly pertinent, but it will be answered, I believe, only if an effort is made, first, to re-create the mental atmosphere in which the decision was reached and to see what correspondence existed between that mentality and the actual historical facts; and, second, to consider what in the world, or out of it, brought such a mentality into existence.

In attempting this, I would suggest that the "verdicts of history" be forgotten. Such verdicts are usually so separated in time from the evidence as to permit, if not encourage, lies and myths. What would obviously be profitable is a coherent narrative in which all pertinent events would be fitted into their actual setting without recourse to the shoe-horn of hindsight. By that same token, it is not irrelevant to the present to suggest a few of the anterior relations between minds and events that impressed themselves at the time they happened upon one observer as he watched the encounter of China and the United States during the past fifteen years.

II

IT is beyond question that, in the course of the decade preceding the China debacle, the American government moved toward the encouragement of a coalition between the Chinese government and the Communist party of China, and that it did not discourage at least a degree of Russian Com-

munist influence in Manchuria. It is also beyond question that there was a singular unanimity of opinion in regard to this policy among journalists, students of international affairs, specialists on the Far East, writers of war books and readers of them, missionaries, elders in the Republican party, New Dealers, and conservative Democrats, and that this opinion was so close to that of Americans officially at work in Chungking and in Washington as to pose the question of whether the State Department was making policy or merely following the prevailing winds of supposed enlightened opinion.

A few individuals, a few officials, several Congressmen, and several periodicals stood apart. (Oddly enough, the fact of their having been "prematurely" anti-Communist in Chinese affairs now marks them as objects of suspicion for otherwise intelligent people: how many liberals can bring themselves to forgive the *New Leader* for being right while the *New Republic* was being wrong about Mao Tse-tung?) These voices were, unhappily, far fewer than those encouraging the government to be more openly favorable to the Chinese Communists. There was widespread talk, for instance, that the Communist regime ought to be recognized, and recognition withdrawn from Chiang—and this talk was not even an echo of the Communist line at the time, which confined itself to the popular proposal of arming the Chinese Communists. In some quarters, it was felt so proper to speak freely about an entente with Russia over China that President Roosevelt was even quoted on the concessions he was willing to make to Stalin at the forthcoming Yalta conference.

Whatever is to be said about the secret agreements at Yalta or about American flirtation with Chinese Communism—in my view then, as now, both were unfortunate—it must be said that the agreements and the flirtation were supported almost unanimously by educated American opinion at the time they were being planned. What to do with the King of Italy was a topic that provoked more variety of opinion than the question of what to do with the vast, remote country of China.

If the first conclusion to be drawn about United States policy toward China is that almost everybody held the same attitudes at the same time, the second conclusion is that

almost everybody showed the capacity to change his conclusions simultaneously. Attitudes toward Chiang Kai-shek, for example, underwent a sudden switch-around in the space of about two years. At the end of 1941, Chiang was considered by most interested Americans to be a remarkable statesman, an astute strategist, a wise administrator, a reformer, and a Christian gentleman. His country was prayed for in churches and aided by way of United China Relief; for some years China figured as World War II's poor little Belgium. Only two years later, at the beginning of 1944, Chiang was considered by the same Americans to be a reactionary politician, an incompetent military man, a fumbling leader, a feudalism, and a Confucianist. Opinions concerning the government of which he was head underwent a similar shift. What had been valiant became venal; what had been courageous, corrupt; what had been reformist, reactionary.

Later on, the Americans who had unitedly changed their mind about Chiang began a similar revision in their views of the Chinese Communist party. These revisionists included men within the State Department (which in its official voice forever reminds one of Shaw's Major Sergius, who folds his arms and proclaims, "I never retract"), professors, newsmen, and citizens who wrote and read books and reports. They retreated from blanket approval of Chinese Communism by way of a series of complicated mental maneuvers. Many citizens came all at once to believe, for instance, that the now less-loved Communists would be certain to provoke Chinese xenophobia because of the aid got from Russia, while Americans would become beneficiaries of Chinese friendship because their government was no longer giving aid. Then there was wide agreement that, inasmuch as China had proved too great a problem for the United States, she would undoubtedly prove too great a problem for anyone else, including Russia, and that whoever tried to take her over would bog down. A little later, there was the argument that Chinese Communism was about to go Titoist. And finally, persons who had been enthusiasts for Mao Tse-tung began to insist publicly and privately that they had always worked against Communism in China, and that they had opposed Chiang Kai-shek with the particular purpose of strengthening

China against it. At the same time, they began to mutter about a "China Lobby."

These shifts of opinion admit logically of three explanations. It can be argued—as I propose to—that opinion on the Far East moved with such uniformity because hardly anyone was in contact with the basic facts, and because almost everyone sought refuge in myths. Or it can be argued that it changed because the facts changed, and that everyone kept in step because everyone was indeed keeping in touch with events: namely, Chiang changing from statesman to feudalism, the Chinese Communists from reformers to international adventurers. Or it can be argued that facts, particularly those about China, are hidden things, and that the mass march of American opinion from one position to another resulted from the progressive unfolding of matters that were necessarily unknowable some years before.

THERE is no question, certainly, that China presented a remarkable multiplicity of facts, many of them seemingly inexplicable and many of them seemingly contradictory. Bizarre varieties of misinformation did indeed flourish among the best newspapermen, the best officials, and the best experts. The existence of misinformation does not, however, prove the non-existence of correct information. And it remains incontrovertible that a few Americans did have correct information—whence the animus that many liberals feel toward them; such men indicate that opinions on foreign policy can be based on a reasonable estimate of events instead of on a guess as to what the events will turn out to be; it is disheartening, after all, when one's opinion has been proved wrong, to be reminded that the right opinion was not just luck. The difficulty with persons who now argue "How could we have known?" is, of course, that they were at the time insisting somewhat stridently "We know."

The argument that the facts changed suffers from a similar difficulty: at the time when the facts were supposed to be changing no one came forward with any facts. Instead, quite suddenly Chiang was regarded as a fallen deity: "I have lost faith in the Generalissimo"; while to others he was an eternal rascal unmasked: "I always knew he was a bandit."

To find a historical basis for these abrupt

shifts is indeed difficult. The formulation of China policy reflected, not a series of different facts, but a totality of shifting opinion. This opinion tended to fall somewhat neatly into quasi-Marxist clichés, largely, I imagine, because such pat formulas were at the time afloat pretty much everywhere in the sophisticated air. Stereotyped views have insidious appeal, particularly for people who have a nicely developed sense of order; myths are neatly conceptual, simple to handle. They encourage a cozy sense of mouselike fraternity; indeed they are the formulas forever favored by mice attempting to account for mountains.

III

BUT before concluding that the great body of informed Americans looked at China and saw myths of their own making, it is essential to study a series of what might charitably be called misconceptions, and to ask whether these misconceptions could conceivably have resulted from facts changed or facts concealed:

The basic economic and social problem in China was feudalism, and the basic need was division of the land. History refutes this. By the end of the 4th century B.C.E., Chinese farmers owned their land. During the following century feudalism was abolished. Before the beginning of the Common Era primogeniture had been done away with. It was all but impossible to build up either large landowning classes or hierarchic orders on the Japanese and European models. There were undoubtedly very sore spots in Chinese society, and it is unquestionable that social and political measures toward equality of any sort and all sorts had justification there, as in other countries. The fact remains, however, that concentration of landownership was less marked during the 20th century in China than in the United States. The best set of land statistics—available to anyone during the 40's—were collected between 1929 and 1933 by a University of Nanking survey under the directorship of John Lossing Buck, and these indicated that some 29 per cent of the arable land in China was rented as compared to a figure for the United States of 44 per cent. Two per cent of Chinese farmers turned out to be sharecroppers, as compared with 9 per cent of American farmers.

Average rent from land did not exceed the interest given on deposits in modern Chinese banks. What was wrong with the cry for land reform was not simply that it echoed Communist propaganda, but particularly that it hid from view other reforms more urgently needed, as for instance, increased industrial production, improved use of the land, introduction of drought-and-disease-resistant seeds, equalization of taxes, development of credit cooperatives, and so on.

The Kuomintang was a monolithic organization almost entirely in the hands of reactionaries. It is undeniable that many Kuomintang members elevated their own interests above those of their country, that some of them engaged in gathering personal spoils, and that others tried to control the ideas of students and the writings of journalists. But it is also undeniable that no sort of totalitarian rule emerged from these activities. Except for its break with the Communists in 1927, the Kuomintang conducted no purges; rather it took into its membership non-partisan and well-educated men; it embraced a variety of factions, some of them sharply critical of the party leadership; it even put a stop to the farming out of taxes, once a highly lucrative source of income for officials. Furthermore, it was never strong enough to control the Chinese political atmosphere, which had been relatively free for two thousand years of the autocracies that were supposedly governing it. At the very time when certain party leaders were trying to curb free speech, speeches were made in public and articles even appeared in newspapers against these attempts. Finally, the Kuomintang was the creator of whatever modern government existed in China, and it was the author of an organic law that provided not only for party power but also for the end of such power and for constitutional rule.

The Chinese government, incapable of wise rule, remained in power only through terror. There was indeed violence at the time of the 1927 split with the Communists and at the time of the Communist revolution after World War II. But the violence at the beginning and end of Central Government rule was not the stable pattern of government activity between these two events. That government, to be sure, never provided its citizens with civil safeguards of an American sort. But it committed sufficiently few out-

rages upon them to be able to introduce paper currency all over China without force of arms. This feat spells unmistakable popular support for the government; for generations the Chinese had used copper and silver, and such paper currency as existed was a thing of the cities, seldom honored in the countryside. The government, moreover, was able to subdue most of the war lords—so numerous during the 20's and early 30's—and to render the rest impotent. Finally it was able to carry on a continuous war against Japan for eight years despite loss of communications, cities, and factories in the East. It is doubtful whether these military activities would have been possible without a considerable measure of confidence on the part of the Chinese people. It is obvious that the Central Government lost the confidence of large numbers of Chinese during the civil war, and that it lost the confidence of many Chinese intellectuals somewhat earlier. Here the important fact is that there was confidence to lose, not chains to be broken, and that during the critical war years, when American policy toward China was being framed, the confidence was there for the examination of any who troubled to look.

Chiang Kai-shek may once have been something of a statesman but he turned out to be a power-seeking old war lord. Chiang Kai-shek was the strong head of a government which had many of the weaknesses traditional with government in China. It was his task to manipulate men and events, to form coalitions and break them, to temporize when necessary, to strike hard when possible—all to the end of making China united and strong. This was his basic aim when Westerners were calling him a statesman; it was still his basic aim when they were calling him a war lord. The stubbornness that was one of his chief traits—and which ought by itself to have dispelled any notions of the alterability of his character—sprang essentially from his conviction that China should be accorded the rights of a great nation, a conviction he held so strongly that at times it took somewhat ritualistic forms. During the Sian kidnaping in 1936, Chiang's chief complaint was that he was not being treated in a manner befitting the head of a great state. In 1944 he objected to his treatment by General Joseph Stilwell in precisely the same terms. It is possible to

argue that Chiang's character might have benefited from some kind of change, but it would be difficult to suggest just what sort of change *should* have taken place. It was his fixation on the unity of China and his ritualistic doggedness in trying to bring it about that gave China sufficient unity to resist Japanese invasion and sufficient dignity to turn down repeated and increasingly favorable Japanese peace offers. Inherent in his pursuit of this idea were his peremptoriness, his excessive meddling in small matters of administration, and his public exhortations on the value of Confucianist virtues and the wickedness of dissension and differences of opinion. Separate any one of these characteristics from Chiang's general make-up, and it becomes difficult to imagine the man capable of holding China together during two decades of international and civil war. Persons who do not warm to strong men and to nationalists may regret, as does this writer, that Chiang was unable to rise above the history of his times; but we cannot argue that he fell beneath it. He personified an urge to national strength felt by the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people.

It was Communist China, not Nationalist China, that really fought the Japanese. During 1944 and 1945 common enlightened opinion in the United States was preoccupied with the charge that the Central Government's armies were busier trying to block the Communists than defeat the Japanese. The fact is that, in attempting to defeat the Japanese, the Central Government's armies inevitably blocked the expansion of the Chinese Communists. Until 1941, when Russia and Japan signed their first non-aggression pact, the Chinese Communists did fight. Thereafter they expanded as the Japanese expanded; they infiltrated the countryside around the towns that the Japanese occupied, undertook the political and economic organization of it, and instituted their own rule. They fought when they needed supplies, when one of their administrative centers was threatened by a Japanese advance, or when the Japanese made one of their relatively infrequent raids into the countryside. During Japan's 1944 push to cut the whole of China in half, a substantial part of the Japanese forces and a large part of the Japanese supplies passed unmolested in the vicinity of major concentrations of Chinese

Communist strength. Such facts, available at the time, indicated not a great deal of Communist fighting, but a great deal of Communist expansion.

The Chinese Communists were primarily agrarian reformers, and were pushed after the war into Russian arms by American hostility. One particular article of faith among enlightened Americans was that the Chinese Communists formed an independent group that could be won for friendship to the United States. Yet the Communists themselves had publicly stressed a "younger brother-older brother" closeness to Russia, and whatever their changes in policy, they remained in accord with Moscow's line. Their pamphlets and theoretical writings (which could be had at the capital, Yenan, where American observers were stationed) insisted on the indispensability of Russian aid and counsel to the Chinese revolution. In 1939, for instance, Mao Tse-tung wrote: "This new kind of New Democratic Revolution is part of the world proletarian socialistic revolution, which resolutely fights against imperialism, i.e. international capitalism." In 1944 the Chinese Communist party adopted a resolution reading: "The cooperation of the Chinese Communist party with the United States is a temporary strategy." It is evident today, of course, that the term "agrarian" far from exhausts the interest of the Chinese Communists. What is still not evident to many observers is the existence of a large body of theoretical writings on the usefulness of agrarianism as an avenue to Russian-type dictatorship—much of it in print at the time the agrarian talk became current. It was not American hostility that pushed the Chinese Communists into Russian arms; the Russians pushed them into hostility toward America. The Chinese party changed its line on the United States at precisely the same time as all the other Communist parties throughout the world.

A sinister China Lobby has long been getting in the way of Far Eastern policy and thus bears the onus for whatever may have gone wrong in the Far East. This misconception seems to serve as a sort of counter-punch against assaults on U. S. government policy. Insofar as the cry of "lobby" is a *tu quoque* to the cry of "Red spies," it offers an additional lesson in the foolishness of talking about foreign policy in a high-

decibel howl. The trouble with the talk about the "China Lobby" is that this supposed body has been critically lacking in personnel. About the only people who have been trying for any length of time to encourage legislators to look more warmly on Nationalist China are Congressmen Judd and Knowland (who, after all, are elected to talk) and importer Alfred Kohlberg (who, after all, is at liberty to spend money if he wants to in an attempt to affect opinion). There is, of course, Senator McCarthy; indeed, the counter-cry of "lobby" is only one of the many counter-myths this myth-making Senator helps breed. However, in matters Chinese McCarthy is strictly a Johnny-come-lately, vocal and on hand for political row-making today, but nowhere to be heard yesterday on the actual making of policies. About the only Chinese who has tried for any length of time to pressure the executive branch of the government—and practically the only Chinese who has a taste for Western-type pressuring—is T. V. Soong, whose mind has been fertile with supply and loan schemes. There is, of course, the Chinese Embassy; but, by contrast with many other embassies, its voice and its activity are low-pitched.

Indeed, if there was such a thing as a China Lobby, its activities were significantly weak. During the war it was the least effective of the "lobbies" of all our allies, for it was unable to get even a fraction of the supply needs for the Chinese armies, which rotted up to the winter of 1944-45. It was unable even to get wind of the widely pre-discussed Yalta agreement. It was unable to raise an effective voice against the notion of an American-sponsored coalition between the Chinese Communists and the Chinese government. It was unable to clear away the obstacles to effective aid to that government after the war, unable to get permission to use UNRRA funds for long-term rehabilitation instead of short-term relief, unable to prevent the cutting off of all American arms when the uneasy truces between the Chinese government and the Chinese Communists broke, unable even to point out to American officials, Congressmen, and citizens that China was by no means getting as much aid as the formal figures seemed to indicate.

Until the late hour—I believe it was probably mid-1947—when it would have taken miracles, and not simply changes of policy,

to stop the Communist conquest of China, there was no talk of a China Lobby. The talk started when convictions in Washington on the subject of China—convictions, I repeat, until then shared by almost all literate Americans—became the pretext for a political row of a purely American sort. It should be somewhat obvious that about the last use the Chinese Nationalist government would make of men and money would be to wave its arms or—an activity hardly less public—wiggle its fingers before the American government at a time of fracas over foreign policy, let alone in times of election fisticuffs.

The China Lobby, it would seem, does not deserve serious historical attention as a fact. It is a slogan that can be used—as, alas, so many slogans have been used before—to hint darkly about the sinister influence of feudalistic-minded no-goods; to review the more fantastic charges—from personal immorality to secret imperialism—leveled against Chiang and his government during and after the war; and to gossip about corruption on a colossally super-colossal worldwide scale. (It would be a relief if, for once, there were evidence and not gossip.) Mention of a China Lobby makes it possible to talk about supposedly dark motives behind the disobedience of two Chinese purchasing officers to their government, and to consider supposedly deep policies underlying the pique of a retired war lord now living in the suburbs of New York. It also makes it possible to retail diplomatic chit-chat, to peddle selected and perhaps stolen embassy messages, and even to announce the breaking of the Chinese code. All this can be made into a fascinating story of intrigue, but the only sort of history that can be extracted from it is that of a group mentality which, in matters Chinese, has not only persisted in its uniformity but become even more uniform since McCarthy began talking of the Department of State as a nest of Red spies.

IV

AMERICANS developed their various misconceptions about China at a time when the country had become gray and worn out. In the last years of the war it was not easy to be enthusiastic over works of reform. It was almost essential for Chinese intellectuals and officials to hold several jobs or manage

some form of squeeze in order to eat. Armies were decaying at the front for want of supplies, and inflation had bred confusion in government offices and in factories. A few persons argued that these difficulties were those necessarily attending a long war fought by an agricultural country without major outside assistance and financed by means of an inflation. But under the influence of a common climate of opinion, and with a brash devotion to the misconceptions which flourished in that climate, most Americans concluded that Chiang and his government were responsible for almost everything that was wrong in China and that the Communists were responsible for almost everything that was right.

Fancies of this order—although not necessarily this particular fancy—continued to serve as facts long after the Chinese Communists were recognized as Communist. Note, for instance, Dean Acheson's intellectual gymnastics at the MacArthur hearings, where he moved with great verve and aplomb through a series of reports, dates, meetings, statistics, facts, and what may be called semi-facts. He emphasized that there had been no such thing as an effective government in China ("no Chinese government has had authority, by which I mean substantial authority—through China since the period of the Manchus"); that there was a social revolution going on ("the age-long battle between the peasants and the landlords"); that the Chinese government ran into trouble through ineptness rather than through deficiencies in supplies; that the American government had provided vast quantities of the latter; and that the main American activity in China after the war was getting the vanquished Japanese out and refereeing an intramural prize fight.

All this resembled the answer of a man explaining to his neighbor why the dish he had borrowed was broken: I didn't break the dish; it was broken when I got it; I tried to keep it from getting broken; and there really wasn't any dish at all. More important, the facts were highly problematical, even though Mr. Acheson skillfully sought to defend himself by quoting such persons as General Wedemeyer and Chiang Kai-shek. There had been an effective government in China—effective enough to remove, win over, or neutralize the war lords, and to establish paper

currency throughout the land. There had not been "an age-old battle between peasants and landlords," and the "social revolution" was an armed rebellion which, like all Communist struggles, aimed not to liberate people but to clamp them in a vise-tight system of organization. And the remarks of Chiang Kai-shek and of Foreign Minister Wang Shih-chieh, quoted by Acheson in support of the Yalta pact, were taken out of context: both men were dismayed when they learned about it in June 1945.

Mr. Acheson, who has performed valiantly in containing Russia in Europe, resorted by no means to the deliberate twisting of facts. He was simply reporting what was, as late as June 1951, the consensus of informed opinion on China. Like many another policy-maker, he had to depend on the reports and data made available to him. What was significant about his remarks was the disclosure of the nature of the facts upon which the State Department had to make up its mind—and particularly of the mentality that would let its mind be made up on the basis of such facts.

The argument here is not that China's collapse was for this or the other reason. The argument, rather, is simply that there was a climate of opinion that lacked contact with facts, that there was a line along which literate opinion walked too readily—rock-ribbed Republican and Fair Deal Democrat alike. The fact that ambitious illiterates have recently taken to describing this line as strictly Communist should not be allowed to hide the fact that the line did indeed have certain threads in it of Communist manufacture. But, in turn, this should not be allowed to get in the way of an inquiry as to why American opinion was willing to accept a *line* of any sort with such unanimity, whatever its inspiration.

V

REASONS why there was a line are suggested by the fact that Americans went to China, looked at China, or simply read reports on China because they were concerned, not with a people's situation to be understood, but with a job to be done. Americans found it nettlesome to decide what was going on there, but they also had to reach quick conclusions in order to get on with their as-

signments, which included nothing less than two urgent and simultaneous tasks—the reform of all China and the defeat of the Japanese empire. The line was essential; once a man had a grip on it he had to hang onto it, for if he lost it he felt himself literally out of touch with the whole immense and confusing problem of China.

The pull behind this line was primarily not the Kremlin, but a new way Americans had found of looking at politics, especially as they involved the relations of democracy to peoples outside our borders, most especially peoples of countries poor in material goods. By virtue of this superior kind of vision, Americans now could look upon the Chinese as objects to be manipulated for large and important purposes, for their own best interests and for the best American interests. There was nearly unanimous agreement among informed Americans that, given their own good will, it was entirely right and proper to manipulate Chinese toward ends that Americans considered good for them.

It is instructive to contrast this agreement with earlier American moral views on the nature of relations between different peoples. If current views stress the conviction that foreign policy is to be judged in terms of the ends it tries to achieve, the earlier views stressed the somewhat different conviction that foreign policy was to be judged—and executed, so far as possible—on the basis of what it contributed to the dignity of man, to the belief that one's own individual person, or that of the man in the next street, next neighborhood, or next country, had value simply by virtue of being a person.

Practically every American proclamation that has stirred foreign peoples—from the Declaration of Independence to the Fourteen Points and the Four Freedoms—has demonstrable roots in this conviction of the dignity of all men, bar none; every proclamation, furthermore, was launched with what might be called warm missionary purpose—the desire to open up a universal and democratic City of Man in which the individual was not subordinated in the final analysis to the ends of organized society.

So far as Europe was concerned, this desire was most practically expressed by free immigration, which was as much an affair of foreign as of domestic policy. It was not feasible for Americans to export democracy

to Europe, but it was feasible to have Europeans come to America. Free immigration was token of a deep faith that democracy was something for all peoples and not only for a few.

In other parts of the world this American concern for the City of Man took the form of what might be called frontier-style diplomacy. You maintained the right of your neighbor to live a free man in his own house even if he did not live as you did; you helped if his house caught fire; but you did not insist upon knowing his name, let alone upon inquiring into his business and telling him how it ought to be run. The Monroe Doctrine, after all, affirmed in effect the right of self-determination. And self-determination was espoused out of a conviction that men, though they be of different race or even condition of servitude, would in the natural course of things, being of the same basic mind and desires as ourselves, come to a democratic order of society, that being the least objectionable of all known orders.

In the 19th century such ideas of international behavior worked well enough in China to lead the great scholar and official Tsêng Kuo-fan to remark: "The American barbarians are not like the other barbarians; it seems they cherish no idea of trespassing on the sovereignty of China. They are good-natured and express their willingness to negotiate with China on the problems caused by other barbarians." The first envoy of the Chinese Empire to the Western powers was a former American minister to China. American interest in the territorial and administrative integrity of China was an established fact for almost half a century before John Hay almost accidentally formulated and established it as policy in 1899.

Today there is no longer free immigration or talk of it; controlled immigration is the most that liberal opinion is willing to work for in America. There is now a disposition to consider self-determination as nothing more than a slogan presenting interesting problems in semantics. Even among missionaries, concern is not so much with individual Chinese souls (as in the 19th century) as with Chinese institutions: schools, hospitals, governments. And it is no longer fashionable in intellectual circles to talk about the dignity of man. Historically, this sentiment sprang from the Jewish and Chris-

tian picture of man as having been created in the image of God, and while it may be possible for many individuals to maintain a lively sense of humanity without belief in God, it is evident that disbelief has given the sentiment of human dignity the character of a mere convention, a thing brought about by social processes and always subject to "changed conditions."

Now it is somewhat difficult for a man who is not certain as to whether there is such a reality as human dignity to feel convinced that a Chinese night-soil carrier has it. It is much easier to regard him as "backward" and hence as a sort of second-class person who needs to have his life re-ordered. The American answer to the question as to whether such a man does have dignity has important bearing on three factors crucial to American relations with China. The first emerged in 1937 when the Japanese invaded China, the second in 1942, when the ratio of military effort between East and West was set, and the third in 1945, when the shape of the peace was molded.

Nineteen thirty-seven was the year it became apparent that the policy of Chinese self-determination had become anachronistic. As late as 1931 Henry L. Stimson had applied it to slap the hands of the Japanese—smartly but ineffectively—when they reached for Manchuria. On the occasion of Japan's full-scale invasion in 1937, Cordell Hull mentioned the policy somewhat timidly, but the Japanese did not appear to listen. They were aware that there was no force, violent or non-violent, to back the policy, apart from that amorphous entity, world opinion. Sympathetic though they were to China during the earlier years of the Japanese invasion, the American people were not enough so to act on the conviction, long embodied in foreign policy, that no foreign power should establish mastery over the Chinese people. Such action would have meant the application of economic and political sanctions—and also some risk of war.

Self-determination still remained, to be sure, the key word of China policy, but it was so little heeded that by 1942, when the United States found itself in the war that it had taken such pains to keep out of, it was possible to make the single most important postwar decision without even considering

its effect on China's ability to maintain herself as an independent country. This decision concerned who should get what supplies. There were not enough supplies to satisfy the needs of the United States armed forces and at the same time those of all our allies. A clear-cut decision was made to give Europe a high priority, China a low one. This decision was certainly one of the most critical of the war; the President, Churchill, General Marshall, and Mr. Stimson were all agreed upon it. It should have been evident to the American government that the placing and timing of American arms would affect, not only the course of the war, but also the postwar power alignment of the world. This fact was evident, however, to very few people. After a somewhat late start, goods began to flow in quantity to Britain and to Russia; practically none went to China. There could have been no hesitation about supplying Russian land forces in Europe; the Nazi-Soviet war was then touch and go. But there could have been some doubt as to the wisdom of weakening China by depriving her of supplies, particularly since it was evident that, in the event of victory, American aid would have served greatly to increase Soviet strength in the East as well as West. And a minimum could have been spared for China that would hardly have been missed by the American army. Building up Chinese strength by an airlift—as promised in 1942 but not effected until 1944—would have strengthened China immediately against Japan and potentially against the Chinese Communists. By not doing so until too late, the United States and Britain created a power vacuum in the Far East that became highly attractive to Russia.* American policy-makers still talked about "a strong and free China," but gave the matter practically no concerted thought.

Even at the end of the war, our government gave little sign of having thought the problem of China through. It was evident that once the Japanese were displaced from the cities and the Russians moved themselves out of Manchuria, the Chinese Communists would have an excellent chance to move in.

* American supplies did not reach China in quantity until 1945, by which time most of the Chinese armies were torpid and the Chinese economy chaotic. Material dispatched in 1944 was used up largely by B-29's in raiding Tokyo.

This contingency was thought to offer so little threat to either China or the United States that in July 1945 a plan was presented to Chiang Kai-shek for his approval, calling for the landing of the American Tenth Army north of Shanghai—and the arming of a million Chinese Communists. Chiang was so angered that he refused to see any Americans for some days. General Wedemeyer, almost alone among Americans, foresaw a dangerous vacuum. After speculating on what might result from the equation of Russians plus Chinese Communists plus Japanese military equipment, he recommended that seven American divisions be sent into North China and Manchuria to aid in enforcing the Japanese surrender. Chiang agreed to this, and the recommendation was dispatched to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who sent it on to General MacArthur. About to enter Japan, he said no.

VI

THIS military myopia was accompanied by political vertigo. If short-sightedness led to the minimization of the importance of China's military position, dizziness and red spots before the eyes can alone explain the great plan of plans for China—part of a great plan of plans for the whole world—which looked to postwar collaboration between the United States and Russia resting on the friendship and like-mindedness of these two supposed comrades-in-arms. The over-all plan had the cordial support of Harry Hopkins and the calculated support, at least, of the President. Adolf A. Berle, Jr., who regarded the whole idea as fanciful, has reported that Dean Acheson was for it. Many, many persons, in government and out, Republicans and Democrats, persuaded that the peace of the world hung on Russo-American friendship, thought that there was hardly any sacrifice too great to make for it.

The Chinese government was to play its part by forming a coalition with the Communists, who were in rebellion against it, and by establishing closer ties with Russia. These last were taken care of by the secret Yalta agreements, which were more important, probably, as an expression of the state of mind that produced them than as the deed that permitted Russia to do what she would most likely have done anyhow. The coalition

was pressed by American diplomats up until the middle of 1947; it then became obvious that civil war was an inescapable fact in China—and it should also have become obvious then that only a vast amount of United States aid could check the Communists.

The important fact here is not the patent stupidity of trying to force any government to come to terms with an armed Communist opposition, but rather the profounder stupidity of making policy decisions exclusively in terms of power realities, and of overlooking all the moral considerations that are imposed by genuine democratic conviction. This moral obtuseness lay in quoting too facilely slogans about democracy, and in considering too lightly the realities of democratic principles practiced: otherwise the slightest reference to the facts of two decades of history could have revealed to anyone that to think our Russian "partner" possessed any trace of democratic convictions was to indulge in sheer self-delusion. In any case, moral principles and democratic values were so little considered that facts bearing upon them were not considered either.

Essentially, the plan for cooperation with Russia was an attempt to construct a power grid in a world, supposedly, of pure politics. The insistence on a coalition in China was an attempt to deal with the problems of a stricken country, not on the basis of principle—the old principle of keeping China free from foreign domination—but on the exclusive foundation of something called "political expediency." As if there could be such a thing as political realism without reference to the realities of political convictions! As if "realism" did not mean precisely the application of the moral principles of those around council tables! As if Soviet policy were anything else but the application of Russia's own peculiar "moral" principles!

No longer was there mention of the fundamental ideals and tenets that had hitherto been presumed to underlie American policy. During the war quite a number of the State Department's bright young men had become irked with Mr. Hull's reaffirmations of abstract principles of international morality, and they had yearned after a politics of pure calculation, a politics that might even be manipulated in accordance with a "theory of games." But they made the error of thinking that for Stalin, too, politics was a game, with

Russian Marxism and world revolution mere counters. For them the Yalta pact symbolized a liberation from moral leading strings.

According to old-fashioned doctrine, people were not means to any end, but ends in themselves; they were to be encouraged toward as much freedom as possible, so that their potentialities as human beings could be realized and their aspirations achieved. The assumptions behind Yalta were very different. To be sure, there was loud talk about the Common Man, but he was now regarded as so common that it was thought best to pre-arrange his destiny for him. People were now to be manipulated for some particular purpose—"bread" or "peace" or the national interest. (Nationalism appears to be one moralistic constant in the relativity of modern morals.) The belief that foreign policy had to have a core of human aspiration was honored in words but denied in practice.

It is obvious, we have said, that policy cannot be separated from conviction, even in the minds of those who insist on this separation. And conviction of a certain sort the policy-makers had indeed. Their hypnosis with *Realpolitik* rested on a certain sort of world view; so did the hypnosis with Communism, with which during the war many intellectuals enjoyed a second honeymoon—the enthusiasm of the 30's having been the first. The core of the matter was that the Americans who talked about China's need for democracy, at the same time that they urged a Popular Front coalition with the Communists, had no real faith in the relevance for Chinese of democratic rights and processes as enjoyed in America. The "realistic" Westerner, looking at poor and stricken China, could not conceive that sick, suffering, and starving persons were capable of caring about their worth as individual persons; all they could conceivably want was full stomachs. With the best will in the world, Americans who would not have accepted economic determinism, let alone Communism, for themselves, accepted both for the "backward" Chinese. Most of them did not see culture destroyed, traditional Chinese freedom abrogated, mass imprisonment and mass execution—although a few realists obviously accepted that new First Law of Dynamics of the Political Universe, the impossibility of making omelets without breaking eggs.

IT THUS becomes evident why certain informed Americans find a degree of relief in being told that United States opinion about China was manufactured by a few skillful Communists dodging in and out of Washington offices. It becomes equally evident why other informed Americans cry with dismay whenever such reports are made public. The one group finds itself relieved of responsibility for ideas it was only too willing to entertain until quite recently. The other group is horrified to find people whose ideas it still shares being labeled Communist. The one group has to believe that the China decision was the work of a conspiracy and not a manifestation of its own state of mind. The other group has to believe that there could not have been a conspiracy, because the alleged conspirators were simply thinking along the same lines as itself. Neither of these groups, obviously, is in any sense conspiratorial. They only believed the Chinese should be manipulated, not necessarily to the benefit of Russia, but particularly to that of China and the United States. But both groups, just as obviously, cling to the basic idea of authoritarianism: namely, that people have to be led by the nose to great goals which they are too stupid or weak to reach by themselves.

China thus serves in some ways as a more accurate mirror of the collective American mentality than does the United States itself. Americans do believe in democracy in one country—albeit too slipshodly and unthoughtfully—and they will even admit its possibility in some others. But when a country does not consider Asiatics assimilable at all, when it considers Central and East Europeans assimilable only in small numbers, and when it regards Puerto Ricans and Filipinos as second-class citizens, then a very basic moral confusion exists as to the nature of democratic government. With individuals of religious background this confusion often takes the form of a belief that morals, if there are such things, are private matters, and that a vague urge toward doing good is the sole requisite and key to political rectitude.

VII

IF SUCH uniform confusion about the nature of morality and the role of democracy lies at the root of recent American policy

toward China, does it not become hard to pin the primary responsibility for foreign policy on a few officials alone? Obviously they have some responsibility, but I suspect that it is basically of a symbolic nature. These officers represent the public not only in an outward but in an inward guise; they manifest the varied emotional and intellectual shadings of their American environment—an environment that is made up essentially of literate men and women. Certainly, and finally, the China decision cannot be taken as the work of undercover Communists. Is it not by now clear that what was primarily responsible was American opinion in general, and educated opinion in particular—an opinion based on clichés erroneously taken for facts, an opinion alienated from the roots of American democracy?

The breadth of this responsibility becomes evident when one examines the mechanisms through which history worked to effect the China decision. They included everything from informal chats at the State Department to table-talk at the Press Hostel in Chungking. They included the publications of the Institute of Pacific Relations and books that were enthusiastically reviewed in the most responsible newspapers and magazines. They included many of the operations of the OWI and the USIS; they included courses taught in highly regarded universities. They included the Chungking office of the Communist party of China and the offices of the Communist party of the United States.

Behind all these mechanisms were "experts" in great numbers. (Foreign policy is nowadays the work of increasingly large collections of personnel.) If one refuses to accept history and the devices through which it operates as matters of fate, it is impossible to overlook the fact that all these enclaves reached certain identical conclusions, that they reached them because still larger enclaves agreed with them; and that all of them together reached a particular conclusion because they started from much the same premises. Taking their departure from vague good will and uncertain democratic conviction, these groups deluded themselves into believing that simplified and sometimes quasi-Stalinist analyses of the problems of "backward" countries provided precisely that sound basis of agreement among thinking people which would usher in an efficient,

manipulatable world—a world in which non-thinking people without enough to eat would happily sacrifice themselves to five-year plans. It is clear now that the men who tried to establish this latter-day covenant formed a sort of self-chosen herd-elite, esteemed by their fellow thinkers to the degree that they agreed with each other, and sought to influence the American people to think the things they thought.

What is significant here is not the membership list of this elite, but that it was so large and so unanimous; what should most disturb anyone concerned with the strength and security of our government was that none of the men in it—and many of them were noted scholars and patriots—was able to rise above common general opinion and look at the situation for himself. There were no effective voices, no effective leaders. One suspects that it may have been the habit of earlier American policy-makers to take responsibility for their beliefs and conclusions. Certainly this was *not* the habit of our latter-day policy-makers, or even of those opposed to them—and to anyone who remembers the traditional role of outspoken, courageous opposition in democracy, this last fact is possibly the most disturbing of all. It was only after the China policy had collapsed that opposition to it became vocal; and, of course, this opposition now runs some risk of becoming a blind line itself.

THE responsibility for the China decisions thus comes to rest upon a very great many Americans—so many that one is almost tempted to speak of the collective responsibility of educated American opinion as a whole. The plain fact and the sad fact is

that no one was strong enough in knowledge, in spirit, and in conviction to halt a stampede.

Happily, Americans can never fully submit themselves to power politics; morality still remains at least the language of most of us when we talk foreign policy. The China decision, perhaps more than any other aspect of American intercourse with the world, reveals democratic faith at its lowest ebb. Other decisions, other policies, show improvement. It certainly was no ruthless view of the realities of power that led Mr. Truman and Mr. Acheson to commit the United States to action against aggression in Korea. And in finally applying, in 1951, the principle of non-recognition to Communist China—just as Henry L. Stimson applied it in 1931 to Japan—United States policy finds itself standing on its traditional policy of refusing recognition to regimes that are imposed on a people by a foreign power.

But there is the old trouble: the State Department goes on claiming that non-recognition is the ground on which it has always stood. By insisting upon outward consistency, by refusing to admit that its feet ever move, the Department assumes a position that looks not unlike the same old moral and political paralysis, and this helps keep alive unfortunate suspicions of lack of candor on its part, and even of lack of good faith. The Department thus sacrifices the moral authority that could come from a ready admission of a changed position. Somehow, the more the line changes the more it stays the same. Somehow, the deep confusion at the root of foreign policy seems to linger; somehow, whatever is wrong at the root of American intellectual life seems to persist and to find in U. S. foreign policy its greatest flowering.